Southern Gold Society, Founded 2001

Encyclopedia of U.S. Gold Coins 1795-1933 - 2nd Edition
By Jeff Garrett and Ron Guth

In Cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution. United States Gold Coins have seen a popularity boom in recent years.>> read more

March 13, 2010

Welcome New Members!

Allan R. Lacy

Please direct inquiries about membership to the SGS website's About Us page.

News You Can Use

New Annual Gathering Place

There is a annual gathering scheduled during the Georgia Numismatic Association Coin Show, April 16-18, 2010.

Make plans to come join the 2010 Southern Gold Society's official gathering during the Georgia Numismatic Association Coin Show. The coin show will be held April 16-18, 2010 at the Northwest Georgia Trade and Convention Center in Dalton (I-75, Exit 333). The gathering will be on Friday, April 16.

In keeping with our Mission Statement, the gathering is not a regimented program, but more like a social event. Complimentary cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served from 6:30pm to 7:30pm followed by a Dutch treat dinner.

The gathering starts at 6:30 p.m. at the historic Dalton Depot Restaurant & Trackside Cafe, 110 Depot Street, Dalton, GA, (706) 226-3106.

Writer's Needed

One of the purposes of the SGS is to "enjoy each member's knowledge." This newsletter is one of the ways this numismatic knowledge is dispersed. *The frequency of the newsletter is driven by the number of submissions for publication*. The editor of the SGS eNewsletter needs new material and welcomes the opportunity to review your original article for publication. Articles should be relevant to the study of the gold coins and related history of the Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans branch mints and private minters Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers. If you do a presentation at a gathering or other venue, consider compiling your notes into an article. Do not worry about the grammar. The editor will do the rest. Electronic manuscripts should be submitted by email to dcnumisma@charter.net.

Feature

Comments on New Orleans' Civil War Coinage from the 1887 Annual Report of the Director of the Mint

By David Ginsburg

The Annual Report of the Director of the Mint normally included details that year's coin production. However, the 1887 Annual Report included, for the first time, a table showing the mintage by denomination and mint, for each year from 1792.

The Report stated that "[t]his valuable table, which has been compiled with no little care and research, from original sources of information, such as the work-books and delivery books of the coinage mints…" The Report also commented about the state of the records from the southern mints:

> The local records of the mint at Dahlonega have not survived the disorganization of that institution in 1861. Monthly and annual reports made by the superintendent to the Director of the Mint have been found at Philadelphia, and the original account of bullion and coin remain on file in the Treasury Department.
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> The records of the mint at Charlotte are not in as perfect order as could be wished.
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> The work-books of the mint at New Orleans show that a coinage was executed at that institution in 1861, between January 26 and May 31, by the State of Louisiana, after the mint was closed against the United States, amounting to $195,000 in double eagles; and a coinage by the Confederate States of $59,820 in double eagles—a total gold coinage during the sequestration of the mint of $254,820.
>
> In the second and third months of the same year there was also executed by the State of Louisiana at the United States mint in the city of New Orleans a silver coinage of $620,000 in half dollars; and by the Confederate States in the following months of April and May, $481,316.50—a total silver coinage of half-dollars by the State of Louisiana and the Confederate States of $1,101,316.50, from regular dies of the United States supplied late in 1860 for the following year. For obvious reasons, neither of the coinages executed at the United States mint at New Orleans, while out of the control of the Government, has ever been take up in statements of the coinage of the United States.
>
> Thirty-two pairs of dies of the date of 1861, more or less complete, and of all denominations of United States coins, were found at the mint by the agent of this Bureau in January, 1885, and by him destroyed on the 15th of that month.
>
> It is presumed that the larger part, if not the whole, of the gold coin struck, as above described, from United States coinage dies under other than legal auspices, was applied to purchases abroad, and that accordingly it has long since been melted down without ever having appeared in any form in domestic circulation.

The following very interesting statement of the above incidents in the history of the coinage from dies of 1861 is from the pen of Dr. M.F. Bonzano, melter and refiner of the mint at New Orleans during the period in question:

> NEW ORLEANS, November 4, 1887
>
> SIR: In compliance with the request contained in your letter of the 27th ultimo, to furnish such information as I might have in regard to the coinage at the United States branch mint at New Orleans during its occupation by the State of Louisiana and the Confederate States in the early part of 1861, I beg leave to make the following statement:
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> The work-books of the mint at New Orleans show that a coinage was executed at that institution in 1861, between January 26 and May 31, by the State of Louisiana, after the mint was closed against the United States, amounting to $195,000 in double eagles; and a coinage by the Confederate States of $59,820 in double eagles—a total gold coinage during the sequestration of the mint of $254,820.

The officers of the United States branch mint at the time of the secession of the State of Louisiana from the Union were: William A. Elmore, superintendent; A.J. Guirot, treasurer and ex-officio assistant treasurer United States; Howard Millspaugh, assayer; B.F. Taylor, coiner; M.F Bonzano, melter and refiner.

The branch mint and its contents and all other property of the United States were "taken in trust" by the secession convention in December, 1860, through a committee of the convention, at the head of which was the president of the convention, Ex-Gov. A. Mouton. The committee called at the mint, ascertained the amount of bullion in the hands of the treasurer, melter and refiner, and coiner, and required a special bond for the same from each of these officers. A rough settlement was made and all dies of 1860 defaced in the presence of all the officers (except Mr. Guirot). By order of the superintendent coinage was immediately resumed with the new dies of 1861, and continued until the 31st of May, 1861, when a final settlement was made and all bullion transferred to Mr. A.J. Guirot, who had in the mean time been appointed assistant treasurer of the Confederate States. At the same time all the United States dies, of every description—after careful examination and recognized agreement with the coiner's die account—were, with the consent of the coiner, and in my presence, defaced by the late Mr. John F. Brown, the foreman of the department, with the assistance of a workman, the late Mr. Richard Stevenson.

Under the auspices of the superintendent, treasurer, and coiner, who probably believed in the possibility of a peaceful secession, designs for a Confederate coin were made, and that of a half dollar by the coiner, accepted and executed by an engraver of this city, who produced a half-dollar die of such high relief as rendered it impracticable for me in a coining press. From this die four pieces were struck, by successive blows of a screw-press. These four pieces differed from the United States standard only in the legend. I never saw any of these pieces, nor the die, and only the preliminary sketch of it. My information was derived from Mr. John F. Brown, at the time. With the exception of these four pieces no coins of any kind, differing from the United States standard, were ever made at the New Orleans branch mint during the interval from May 31, 1861, to the early part of 1879.

On my return to this city, June 7, 1862, after an absence, at the North, of eleven months, I took charge of the mint as special agent of the Treasury Department; found the canceled or defaced dies undisturbed and intact in the coiner's vault and retained them in my custody until the latter part of December, 1878, when I delivered them, as coiner, to my successor, Mr. M.V. Davis, in the same packages as they were on the 31st of May, 1861. Thenceforth my connection with, and knowledge of, these canceled dies ceased.

I have the honor to be, yours, very respectfully,

M.F. Bonzano.

Hon. JAS. P. Kimball, Director of the Mint, Washington, D.C.

Notes:

1. The Annual Report of the Director of the Mint for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 1887. See page 7 for the extracted text.

2. The Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the State of Louisiana contains an inventory of the property of the New Orleans Mint as of the beginning of 1861. See page 65 for the inventory.

Mission Statement

The Southern Gold Society was formed to increase the enjoyment and study of Southern gold coins and related history, through an informal, relaxed mix of education and fellowship. The society is reminiscent of those of a bygone era, in which connoisseurship and a gentlemanly appreciation of Southern gold coins is the order of the day.

Purpose

- To facilitate the enjoyment and study of the gold coins and related history of the Southern branch mints (Dahlonega, Charlotte, and New Orleans) and private Southern minters (Templeton Reid and the Bechtlers).
- To enjoy each member's knowledge and friendship in an informal manner.
- To provide a relaxed, pleasant environment in which to meet during selected coin shows and other convenient events.
- To encourage the appreciation and preservation of a Southern gold coin's original surfaces.
- To consolidate the information, resources, and talent available to enthusiasts of these historic Southern gold coins.

Annual Membership Fees

Regular $25 (January-December).

Membership for new members joining in October, November, or December extends through the next year. Checks for membership fees should be made payable to the Southern Gold Society and mailed to **David Crenshaw, P.O. Box 237, Dacula, GA 30019-0004**.

Board of Directors

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